

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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S E C R E T NOUAKCHOTT 965

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR XF MR

SUBJECT: MAURITANIAN PRESIDENT ASKS US REMAIN NEUTRAL IN
MID-EAST CONFLICT

1. PRESIDENT OULD DADDAH SUMMONED ME URGENTLY LAST NIGHT
TO EXPRESS HOPE US WOULD HOLD TO ITS PRESENT POSITION
NEUTRALITY AND NOT INTERVENE IN MID-EAST CONFLICT. SAID
THAT HE RECOGNIZED FORCE OF POLITICAL PRESSURES ON US
LEADERSHIP BUT WISHED SHARE WITH US HIS CONVICTION US MUST
TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION NEW DEGREE INTER-ARAB POLITICAL
UNITY AS WELL AS INCREASING AFRICAN SOLIDARITY WITH ARAB
CAUSE.

2. REPLIED I WAS PLEASED TO HEAR PRESIDENT ACKNOWLEDGE
OUR PRESENT NEUTRALITY. FOR MY PART HAD BEEN TROUBLED BY
PLAY GIVEN IN WORLD MEDIA TO ALLEGATIONS SUCH AS THAT BY
SYRIAN AMBASSADOR TO PARIS AND CAIRO RADIO RE USG AIRCRAFT
PARTICIPATION IN CONFLICT. NO ONE HAD INTRODUCED PROOFS
FOR SUCH ACCUSATION; THERE WERE NONE. RECALLED PROPAGANDA
ATTACKS ON USG LAUNCHED ON FIRST DAY OF WAR IN JUNE 1967
ALLEGING USG INVOLVEMENT IN COMBAT OPERATIONS AGAINST ARABS.
AT THAT TIME EXTRA CREDENCE HAD BEEN GIVEN SUCH ACCUSATIONS
BECAUSE THEY HAD STARTED IN JORDAN, OWING TO FAULTY JORDANIAN
INTERPRETATIONS OF THEIR RADAR DATA. THAT THIS COULD HAVE
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HAPPENED IN CAPITAL KNOWN TO BE CLOSE TO US SHOWED HOW
HIGH STRESS COULD TWIST MENS' JUDGEMENTS AND SHOULD REMIND ALL OF
NEED FOR COOLNESS AT THIS TIME OF NEW TENSION.

3. ASSURED HIM BOTH PRESIDENT NIXON, WHOM HE KNEW, AND SECRETARY KISSINGER, WHOSE PRESS CONFERENCE HE HAD EARLIER THAT DAY HEARD OVER VOA, WERE FULLY CONSCIOUS OUR INTERESTS IN THE ARAB WORLD AND OF OUR LONGSTANDING FRIENDSHIPS THERE AND IN AFRICA. THEY ALSO WERE KEENLY AWARE OF DANGERS NOT ONLY TO US INTERESTS BUT TO WORLD PEACE SHOULD PRESENT CONFLICT ESCALATE. IF WE DO NOT EXAGGERATE PROVOCATIVENESS OF PRESENT SOVIET ROLE IN AREA, WE AT SAME TIME HAVE NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT IT. WE APPROACHED WHOLE SITUATION WITH PRUDENCE IT REQUIRED. CONCLUDED THAT I WOULD TRANSMIT PRESIDENT'S DEMARCHE AS SOON AS TELEGRAPHIC SERVICE REOPENED SUNDAY MORNING.

4. COMMENT: OULD DADDAH MADE NO COMMENT ON SUBSTANCE MY PRESENTATION. HE WAS THROUGHOUT HIS CUSTOMARY EARNEST, COURTEOUS AND TACITURN SELF. PRESUME THAT HIS DEMARCHE WAS DICTATED BY TWO CONSIDERATIONS: A. DESIRE ASSIST ARABS BY ADDING HIS VOICE TO THOSE OF OTHERS CAUTIONING US AGAINST INTERVENING, B. DESIRE REAP PUBLIC RELATIONS CREDIT FOR SO ACTING. IF LATTER ASSUMPTION CORRECT, WOULD EXPECT EARLY PROMINENT PLAY OF DEMARCHE OVER STATE RADIO.
MURPHY

SECRET

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